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MEMO FOR WWR:

October 26, 1962

In our forward planning, let's face up to the question of what to do about Cuba itself, as opposed to Cuban MRBMs.

Of course, one of our objectives in this crisis is to dispose of Castro if we can. But we may have to (or decide to) settle for a lot less. Implicit in the President's speech, and in our crisis diplomacy as it develops, is the idea that our target is the missile threat, not Cuba itself.

This makes propaganda sense, especially as the Soviets are making every effort to portray the issue as the US vs. Cuba, and a lot of world opinion has reacted the same way. In short, we look better abroad if we continue our present line that bases, not Cuba, are the target.

On the other hand, a solution which left Castro firmly in control could be bad from a domestic political point of view, unless covered by other, far larger successes. Indeed, certain solutions, via either negotiation or pressure, might entail in effect our guaranteeing the Castro regime, and giving up Guantanamo. This might happen, for example, if we struck a deal with Castro to boot out Soviets.

Certain other courses (i. e. invasion or insurgency), would solve this problem while creating others in its place. Even successful POL blockade, harassment, air strike could so weaken Castro as to lead to internal revolt, either during the crisis or subsequently.

Where I end up is that we should clearly sort out our objectives and the prices we are willing to pay for them. Obviously, best course would be to leave things fuzzy, but this too entails a cost. We may want, in order to justify greatly intensified pressures on Cuba, to proclaim certain "war aims" which would in effect guarantee Castro if he submitted. We could do so in expectation that even so he would be so weakened as to be ripe for internal revolt. At any rate let's look carefully not just at what we'd like but what we can afford to pay.

cc: McGB
Carl Kaysen
Henry Ramsey

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